

# CHALKBOARD

A Publication of the Region II HSD/GED Taskforce



## PHILADELPHIA REGION FOCUSES ON LITERACY AND NUMERACY, HOSTS ACADEMIC OLYMPICS

Participants at the recent Philadelphia Regional HSD/GED Taskforce conference learned about upcoming national initiatives, including changes in TABE testing for 2006, a regional study that's being conducted to improve literacy and numeracy among students and online resources for students and staff. The Academic Olympics Final Competition was held the next day.

Regional Director Lynn Intrepidi opened the conference by asking: How are we defining our students' success?

"Typically we define success by a one-level gain in reading or math on TABE tests or when a student acquires a high school diploma or GED," said Intrepidi. "While these are important measurements, we need to teach our students to be discerning readers and help them comprehend information they will encounter in the workforce."

The taskforce meeting involved four special guest speakers: Lynn Frye with the National Office of Job Corps, Department of Labor consultants Dr. Jeanine Staples and Dr. Angela McIver and Elizabeth Austin with Humanitas.

After the taskforce meeting many participants attended dinner and games with the Academic Olympics teams and showed their support at the final competition the next day.

## REVIEWING CURRENT TEACHING TRENDS IN LITERACY AND NUMERACY

Earlier this year, the Philadelphia Regional Office, with the financial support of the National Office of Job Corps, added two academic consultants: Dr. Angela McIver and Dr. Jeanine Staples, both graduates with degrees in education from the University of Pennsylvania. They will study teaching practices at Job Corps centers across the region. After completing their research, the two will offer suggestions for assessing students' academic levels, determining appropriate curricula and educating instructors on appropriate teaching methods.

"Most of these students don't do traditional school well, which is why they are at a nontraditional institution like Job Corps," said McIver. "We want to help instructors create nontraditional environments in which students can thrive."

Many students at Job Corps perform below the seventh-grade level and may have significant gaps in their learning. McIver and Staples stressed the importance of assessing where each student is, not only by TABE tests and other standardized measurements, but by observing students' deductive reasoning and comfort levels with the material.

What do they mean by deductive reasoning and comfort levels? Getting students to understand why a math problem

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LEFT: Job Corps students answered questions and competed for prizes, including these grand prizes: a Phillips HiFi system, TV and DVD combo, DVD player and microwave. Pictured from left to right: David Broodhax, Charleston Job Corps Center; Scott St. Martin, Shriver Job Corps Center; Matthew Stone, Shriver Job Corps Center; and Rha-Mel Flippen, Charleston Job Corps Center.

works, how parts of speech are used and the ideas they represent – these are keys to helping Job Corps students become successful employees.

“You can’t always determine students’ grasp on the material from a completed worksheet. Engaging them in the process and asking them to demonstrate their learning will lead to the results Job Corps needs,” Staples said.

Staples and McIver will be completing site visits this year and will begin conducting interviews and distributing surveys to instructors in spring 2006. Next summer they will implement a professional development pilot program with the intent to roll out the program to all centers in late 2006.

A few teaching tips from McIver and Staples:

- Create a culture of inquiry by engaging students in conversations about a math problem or about a grammar rule. Encourage students to discuss the subject.
- Don’t assume students understand a concept if they fail to ask questions. After each new subject matter ask students to verbally explain what they just learned.
- Incorporate real-life situations in the classroom. Have students read and write technical documents as well as creative texts. Use memos, spreadsheets, e-mails or newspapers. This increases literacy while supporting math and other skills.
- Supplement your curriculum with special education literature, which is very suitable for nontraditional students, even for those without learning disabilities.
- Exercise students’ four learning skills every day: reading, writing, speaking and listening.
- Use competition to reinforce learning. This technique inspires ownership.

## INFORMATION FROM THE NATIONAL OFFICE

2006 promises to be a year of change for Job Corps. Below are some initiatives shared by Lynn Frye from the Division of National Program Planning and Development in the Job Corps National Office.

### TABE Change

With advanced technology, changing work environments and a global economy, employers are looking for employees who possess skills that were not required or even developed a decade ago. It’s important to keep methods up-to-date. That’s why Job Corps will be moving from the 7/8 TABE test to the 9/10 TABE test. The National Office will finalize transitional plans this year. Implementation will require cooperation on all levels, but this upgrade will better prepare students for the challenges before them by allowing instructors to more accurately measure students’ academic levels.

Job Corps is constantly striving to increase its students’ successes. This past July the program raised the bar by requiring students to score a 567 in reading and 566 in math on TABE tests. The old standard required a 559 on reading and a 560 on math.

The TABE change isn’t the only new format. The National Office is also working to make ESL TABE tests and materials more readily available. The ESL TABE test, which should be released this year, will help instructors measure Spanish-speaking students with the same criteria as English students. The ESL test complements the English version and has equivalent scores.

### Focus on ESL Students

As the Spanish-speaking student population continues to

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[www.jcstudent.org](http://www.jcstudent.org) – Includes information on job searching, resume building, education opportunities and life skills. Sections help students create portfolios or practice employability skills.

[www.jccdr.jobcorps.gov](http://www.jccdr.jobcorps.gov) – COMING SOON. Online database where students can create and save individual portfolios to be used for job searching as well as vocational and academic assessments. This Web site was one of the ideas produced from the Philadelphia Regional Academic Taskforce and is being tested at select centers across the country.

### Online Resources

### TIP on buying GED practice materials –

Get GED materials at a more than 90 percent discount through Kentucky. Visit [www.ket.org](http://www.ket.org) for materials available, and contact Joe Nagel in the Philadelphia Regional Office at (215) 861-5517 or [nagel.joseph@dol.gov](mailto:nagel.joseph@dol.gov) if you are interested in ordering materials.



# 2005 FINAL ACADEMIC OLYMPICS RESULTS

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The six winning teams from the September district contests competed in the Academic Olympics Final Competition on October 5. Several centers from outside the Philadelphia Region participated.

Each team showed tremendous academic talent, and the final scores were very close. The results of the competition were:

## First place –

Shriver Job Corps Center,  
Massachusetts

## Second place (tie) –

Pittsburgh Job Corps Center and  
Westover Job Corps Center,  
Massachusetts

## Fourth place –

Charleston Job Corps Center

## Fifth place –

Old Dominion Job Corps Center

## Sixth place –

Philadelphia Job Corps Center

RIGHT: Pittsburgh Job Corps Center's second-place Academic Olympics team and coaches. Pictured from left to right: John Doheny, Reuben Reid, Coach Michele Papalia, Tiffany Holmes, Will Washington, Coach Ty Rozier, Stephanie Glass and Brandon Riddieck

grow, Job Corps will remain committed to finding ways to accommodate Hispanic students and their instructors. Teaching students with English deficiencies has been a topic of discussion at many regional taskforce meetings, across the country and in the National Office.

To better equip instructors, a new ESL curriculum and training materials will be provided to every center. The National Office will also be looking at centers with success in ESL education to share best practices.

## Helping Students With Learning Disabilities

Only 4 percent of Job Corps students have a documented learning disability, but anyone inside the classroom knows this number is not accurate. The National Office will be allowing more flexibility on each center to place or move students to the most appropriate academic classes. In some cases, TABE test waivers and alternatives to standardized testing will be offered.

The National Office has hired a contractor to conduct a learning disabilities study to gauge how centers teach students with disabilities and determine what staff training is necessary to better handle students' special needs. Site visits are being scheduled, and more information about staff development will be available soon.



**TABE  
and GED  
practice  
testing**

Order answer sheets for TABE and GED practice testing through the data center. Materials are to be used with the TMS system.

E-mail your request to **Helpdesk-JCDC-TAC@jobcorps.org**. Please include:

- Name of the staff member who should receive the shipment
- Center name
- Shipping address of the center (not P.O. box address)
- Type of form requested (TABE or GED form)
- Quantity requested

Centers with OBS of less than 800 may order 1,000 TABE tests and 250 GED practice tests at a time. Centers with OBS of 800 or more may order 5,000 TABE tests and 700 GED practice tests at a time. Allow 10 working days to process the order.

